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ABSTRACT

The paper examines science fiction literature as a product and part of the social consciousness of the modern capitalist world order. This world order is seen as emphasizing science, technology, movement, growth, urbanization, industrialization, complex organization, and progress. The document is organized into two sections. The first section reviews theories of the sociology of knowledge and discusses knowledge as a process of self-production and reproduction of society. Influential theorists include Hegel, Marx, Lukacs, Mannheim, Gramsci, Habermas, and Touraine. Touraine's (1977) dynamic conflict-based systematic theory of society is based on three concepts: historicity, which defines the instruments of society's self-production; the system of historical action which is the totality of social and cultural orientations, by means of which historicity exercises its control of historicity and the system of historical action. The second section discusses science fiction as a process of societal and cultural production. It arose out of the demystification of nature through science and generated a secular mythology which legitimized, sustained, and helped create and expand the emerging society. Science fiction represents the literary-ideological analysis of the interface between man and machines, the exploration of the impact of science upon the individual and society, and the promotion of the view of the progressive character of that impact. Finally, since the 1920s science fiction has had the character of a social movement with magazines, fan organizations, and local, national, and international conventions. (Author/KC)

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IDEOLOGY AND RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

IN CULTURAL PRODUCTION AND REPRODUCTION

by

William C. Martin
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The Problematic of Knowledge in Capitalist Society

The sociology of knowledge derives from Marx' principle that "social being determines consciousness" which carries the implication that every social order has forms of consciousness peculiar to it. Marx saw knowledge as a dynamic and interactive product of the productive forces, forms of capital, and social forms of intercourse by which society produces and reproduces itself. He saw history as a process of change and conflict by which society does not simply maintain itself but produces its future. Marx thus speaks of the knowledge of a given epoch as follows (Marx, 1963):

> The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e., the class, which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class that has the means of material production at its disposal has control at the same time over the means of those who lack the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas; hence, of the relationships, that make the one class the ruling one, therefore the ideas of its dominance. The individuals composing the ruling class possess, among other things, consciousness, and therefore think. In so far, therefore, as they rule as a class and determine the extent and compass of an epoch, it is self-evident that they do this in their whole range, hence, among other things, rule also as thinkers, as producers of ideas, and regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age: thus, their ideas are the ruling ideas of the epoch.

Until recently sociologists have generally directed their attention to science and to major religious, political, and economic ideologies either as total ideologies (Weltanschauungen in Mannheim's sense) or in the more limited and specific usage of ideology. Even art and literature have received little attention. Only in the past few years have sociologists looked at popular culture as such and seldom with any attempt at historical or social meaning of a general theoretical level. This paper looks at a particular genre of literature--science fiction--as a product and part of the social consciousness of the modern capitalist world order. This world-order is seen as emphasizing science, technology, movement, growth, urbanization, industrialization, complex organization, and progress. It is seen as transnational, change-oriented, and future-oriented. Its world-view is everywhere secular.

Essentially conservative writers and editors, such as Hugo Gernsback and John W. Campbell, Jr., have generally viewed science fiction as having something of a social mission, emphasizing and promoting the value of science and technology in capitalist society. Science and technology were combined with faith in progress and a postivistic reconstruction of society. Science fiction is simply the literature of modern society.

From a more radical standpoint the Marxist scholar Bruce Franklin (1978) also sees that science fiction is the peculiar form of literature produced by modern industrial society and the rise of modern science and technology. He uses a working definition of science fiction as being "the literature which, growing with science and technology, evaluates and relates it meaningfully to the rest of human existence." Since industrial society developed first in Great Britain, Europe, and the U.S., science fiction has been until very recently purely a "Western" literary form subject to the literary and

cultural conventions of capitalist society. Franklin sees 19th century American society as being particularly congenial to science fiction. Science fiction "was somewhere near the center of nineteenth-century American literature... There was no major nineteenth-century American writer of fiction, and indeed few in the second rank, who did not write some science fiction or at least one utopian romance (Franklin, 1978:ix)". Science fiction was a technique by which nineteenth-century America defined its consciousness of itself, of science and its relations to society, and its expectations of the future.

Sam J. Lundwall (1971, 1978) questions the position that science fiction is mainly a peculiar English or American phenomenon and sees science fiction as appearing later in the U.S. than almost anywhere else. In what amounts to a polemic against the view that science fiction is a typically Anglo-American phenomenon, he fails to make the case he argues but does succeed in affirming another: that science fiction is the literary form peculiarly defining the consciousness of modern technology-oriented societies including the Soviet Union.

Related to science fiction but assuming some of the claims and status accorded the established sciences is the phenomenon called variously futurology or futures research. Futures research became established during the 1950's and is often associated with the activities and pretensions of such "Think Tanks" as RAND Corporation and the Hudson Institute. Its techniques are statistical analysis, projection and extrapolation from current trends and available resources, and computer simulation of social and economic models. In contrast the science fiction writer deals in

"what-if?" images of the future. Futures research is aimed at long-range planning by governments, the military, and corporations. In its predictions futures research sees the future in conservative rather than radical or transformational terms: the future is a projection of the bourgeois capitalist world-order. On a more imaginative level the same is generally the case with the predictions of science fiction.

Knowledge as Process of Self-Production and Reproduction of Society

The sociology of knowledge concerns itself with the systematic and dynamic relationships between symbolic culture ("mental constructions") and the conditions and structure of society. Hegel first pointed out that the problem of history is the problem of consciousness. Marx secularized Hegel's position by inverting it and locating its dynamism in the material basis of society: "social being determines consciousness." In all his writings, however, Marx attempted to retain Hegel's dynamism of change, contradiction, and becoming while seeing consciousness in complex interaction with the material base. Consciousness for Marx always was a product of the material base while acting to produce and shape that same material base.

But orthodox Marxist theorists, such as Kautsky and Lenin during the generation before the Russian Revolution, had largely reduced the Marxian dynamic of the relationship of consciousness to history to a mechanistic and/or positivistic analysis of ideology as correlate and consequence of social class. Weber, while assuming a Kantian separation of fact and

value developed a bourgeois counterpart to Marx's theory of history based on the problematic empirical relation between value systems and social organization.

In 1923 Georg Lukacs in his GESCHICHTE UND KLASSENBEWUSSTSEIN attempted to rescue Marxian theory of consciousness and history from both orthodox Marxism and positivism. He did this by returning to the Hegelian basis of Marx's world-view and trying to view the "concrete totality" of history through a fusion of the Hegelian-Marxian conception of history with Lenin's theory of revolution based on a revolutionary class led by a vanguard party.

Karl Mannheim regarded his IDEOLOGY AND UTOPIA (1929) as a positivist synthesis of Marx, Weber, and Lukacs: each social class is limited in its consciousness of its historical situation by its class position and interests. For Mannheim the solution to the problem of consciousness lay in the character of a particular social stratum, the free-floating and marginal intelligentsia. Only this intelligentsia could comprehend freedom, the logic of history, and the sociology of knowledge. Mannheim's conception of sociology was compatible with academic sociology and became institutionalized in Robert K. Merton's (1968) influential paradigm for the study of the sociology of knowledge.

The most important development in social science theory since World War II has with little question been the revitalization of theory by Marxism and Neo-Marxism. Marxian and Neo-Marxian theory have led to a greater sensitization to the dynamics of societal change and to a breaking down of the departmentalization and parochialization of social science

theories. From the standpoint of the sociology of knowledge, Antonio Gramsci, Jurgen Habermas, Alain Touraine, and Alvin W. Gouldner are especially suggestive. The following points are not inclusive but indicate the possibilities for a more dynamic sociology of knowledge useful for understanding a society seen as more problematic than most academicians have heretofore seen it.

Antonio Gramsci (1971) breaks with the positivist view of society and develops a creative form of Hegelian Marxism. He sees society as organic process, and consciousness transformation is an integral part of social change. Revolutionary change is total change. The Marxist concept of praxis involves a unity of theory and practice, thought and action. Rejecting Marxian orthodoxy and dogmatism, Gransci directed attention to the societal superstructure. His basic concept here is the idea of hegemony. He defines two types of political control: "domination" (direct, physical coercion), and "hegemony" or "direction" (ideological control). These correspond to the Hegelian distinction between political society and civil society. Organized state power requires legitimacy. Marxism must analyze both spheres of authority to press its political claims. Hegemony is the permeation of civil society by the entire system of values, norms and attitudes which are supportive of the established order and its dominant class. It is an organizing principle or Weltanschauung which is diffused by agencies of ideological control and socialization into every area of everyday life. It tends to become internalized into the "common sense" of the masses. It has a dualistic operation: a "general conception of life" for the masses and a "scholastic

program" or set of principles advanced by a sector of the intellectuals. In the new capitalist order hegemony (ideological control) rather than direct political coercion is the primary instrument of bourgeois rule. In the modern capitalist world system the ruling classes seek complete ideological hegemony.

Transformation of the sociology of knowledge is fundamental in the theories of Jurgen Habermas (1970-1975), Louis Althusser and Alvin W. Gouldner. Jurgen Habermas builds upon the foundations of Hegel, Marx and the Frankfurt School. His critical theory is abstract and difficult to understand and apply. Among his relevant contributions are ideas of ideology critique as a means of comprehending imputed group interests, the view of science as a kind of politics and the scientization of politics, and a technocratic model of politics as reduced to administration. He postulates a New Class divided into organic and "non-pacified" traditional intellectuals, his concern here being the internal dialectics of this New Class. Most recently he has elaborated his theory of communicative discourse. Gouldner has also elaborated a theory of the rise of a New Class of intellectuals as bearers of legitimation and revolution. Louis Althusser has developed the notion of the overdetermination of structural change as well as a theory of the transition from ideology to science.

Alain Touraine (1977) has developed a dynamic conflict-based systematic theory of society. Society and culture are not seen simply as reproduction and adaptation but also as creation and self-production. His analysis is based on three concepts: (1) historicity, which defines the instruments of society's self-production; (2) the system of historical

action, the totality of social and cultural orientations, by means of which historicity exercises its control over society's functioning; (3) class relations, struggles for the control of historicity and of the system of historical action. Society has the capacity to define itself and, through the knowledge and investment achieved, to transform its relations with its environment, to constitute its milieu. Through symbolic creation, there occurs the formation of meaning, a system of orientation of conduct. Society's self-production rises through building categories of knowledge, through economic investment and accumulation, and through the cultural model which generates images of the creative capacity of society. Touraine calls society's consciousness of itself "historicity." He sees the central problem of sociology as understanding "how a society rests upon a set of orientations while at the same time being directed and organized by power, how it is one and also double, historicity and class relations."

Alvin Gouldner (1976) has contributed much to our understanding of the processes by which ideology is generated in technological society. He makes a distinction between the cultural apparatus and the new consciousness industry. The idea of cultural apparatus was conceived by C. Wright Mills to refer to all the organizations, institutions, and milieux in which artistic, intellectual, and scientific work does on and the means by which such work is made available to society. Hans Enzberger used the term "consciousness industry" to refer to the means by which commercial agencies and political authorities support culture; it is largely run by technicians within a framework of profit-maximization and integrated with political functionaries and the state apparatus. These concepts are particularly

relevant for understanding all forms of cultural production in organizational, technological, and capitalist society.

Science Fiction as Process of Societal and Cultural Production

Science fiction is viewed not simply as literature but more dynamically as ideology and as social movement. It is a cultural form peculiar to contemporary industrial and technological society. It arose out of the demystification of nature through science and generated a secular mythology for the emerging society which legitimized the society, sustained the society, and helped create and extend the society. By the beginning of the 18th century the rising capitalist order was already accompanied and rationalized by a belief in science, technology and progress. The Newtonian world-view was established by 1700, and Newtonian physics underlay the engineering of the emergent industrial capitalist system. The notion that the techniques and view of science should also be applied to human phenomena resulted in the appearance of the first social science with the publication of Adam Smith's treatise on political economy in 1776. Political economy supplied both a secular and scientific view of human behavior and institutions and an ideology for the capitalist world-order. The emergent social sciences of the 19th and 20th centuries may be viewed as extensions of this rationalization and secularization of both society and the world-view of that society.

Science fiction must be seen as the cultural and literary form peculiar to this development of science and technology and its related faith in progress. Science fiction from its inception had the character of

a consciousness-expanding experience, a sense of wonder and expectation, a view making known the unknown world generated by the techniques and values of the known. Hence central to any understanding of the nature of science fiction must be a theoretical and empirical analysis of its meaning for the emergent industrial and capitalist world-order and the dominant class interests in this world-order. Science fiction, even if not explicitly the central literary-ideological form of modern society, must be seen as a living expression of a society producing itself, generating a consciousness of itself as it is and is becoming, and reproducing both its structure and culture. Such an analysis must have minimally two components (Martin, 1975): (1) ideology, (2) social movement. Ideological analysis investigates its nature, content, and the structural interests which it expresses. Social movement analysis goes beyond its ideological character to the dynamics by which it is produced, organized, distributed. Social movement analysis is concerned with the organizational processes by which society produces and reproduces itself: processes of mobilization of leadership and resources, of strategy and tactics, and of recruitment for action aimed at societal change.

Any analysis of an ideological phenomenon must take into account the structures by which ideology is generated in society i.e., the cultural apparatus and the consciousness industry. Science fiction has to be seen against the background of an increasing division of labor, specialization, and commercialization of both literature and publishing during the past two centuries. The transition of science fiction from a part of "mainstream" literature to a genre having something of the character of development underground in a kind of literary ghetto is

largely a product of the coming of inexpensive paper and printing which made possible the publication of specialized magazines aimed at limited audiences while making acceptable profits. Associated with this development and necessary to it was the development of a national magazine distribution system. The progenitors of modern science fiction were such men as Hugo Gernsback, F. Orlin Tremaine, and John W. Campbell, Jr. These men were ideologically committed to capitalist society and its class structure, saw social progress as a resultant of human commitment to science and technology, and saw science fiction as having a kind of social mission to promote science and encourage youth to enter scientific careers. Science fiction thus had the central and defining tendency of representing the literary-ideological analysis of the interface between man and machines, the exploration of the impact of science upon the individual and society, and the promotion of the view of the progressive character of that impact. But the social view of the future remains essentially conservative: with limited exceptions even the far future is seen as an extension of the social organization and ideology of the world-capitalist system and its basic class structure. Recent attempts to reincorporate science fiction into mainstream literature reflects changes both in the cultural apparatus and in the mass public, particularly the growth of the university system in the past generation and the greater education of culture consumers.

Since the middle 1920's science fiction has had the character of a social movement. There developed a kind of subculture associated with science fiction, an infrastructure which came to include the magazines, their editors and writers, highly motivated readers (fans), fanzines, fan organizations, and local, national, and even international conventions.

Science fiction by the 1950's had penetrated both sides of the Cold War not only as literary form but also with its organizations. World science fiction conventions occurred on both sides of the ideological front. This suggests that science fiction has a common ideological significance for transnational capitalism and what in the USSR has been called state capitalism. This network of fans and organizations (fandom) was initially and consciously stimulated by Hugo Gernsback when he and other editors began publishing letters in their magazines complete with writers' names and addresses. Correspondence led to the formation of clubs, some of which were sponsored by the magazines. Close and symbiotic relations developed between authors, editors and fans. The first world science fiction convention occurred before the end of the 1930's. Fandom soon developed its own system of annual awards of merit. Fandom became well-integrated with the professional production of science fiction, fans themselves often becoming writers and editors. Thus was originated a societal movement operating within a single tight social network with its own values, norms, and motivations. This total phenomenon, (ideology and social movement) should be analyzed as among the mechanisms by which the modern world order produces and reproduces itself. Science fiction, like all historical phenomena, is both a unique phenomenon and a phenomenon meaningful as a part of the general historical process.

Futures research is seen as a predictable development when professional scientists and technologists attempted to rationally reconstruct the imaginative explorations of science fiction and to constrain these in the direction of more limited technological, economic, and political interests. Futures research reflects the entry of academics as entrepreneurs seeking funds and building careers. Bretnor (1974) pointed out that science

fiction writers were not concerned with predicting the future. The world is not to be seen as a closed system and hence the future is not determined but problematic. The science fiction writer constructs alternative futures which are possible to us. Science fiction can be seen as a literature of change and adaptation to change. At its best it is infused with a sense of wonder, a realization of the capacity of the human mind to transcend the constraints of the present and to experience the idea of the creation of the universe. Futures research is the assimilation of science fiction to organizational society and to organizational needs. Futures research is the reconstruction of science fiction into the thought forms of organizational society. Futures research serves the interest of the new class or organizational men.

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